

Draft Copy of Letter to County Officials in States Where No Public Meetings Are Scheduled

Dear County Official:

On January 2, 2004, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) released the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared in connection with a proposed grazing rule that the BLM published last month. The 60-day comment period will close on March 2, 2004. The BLM also announced a series of public meetings that it will hold in the West and in Washington, D.C., on the DEIS. The Western meetings are scheduled for late January and early February in Salt Lake City, Phoenix, Boise, Billings, and Cheyenne. We want to ensure that local government officials are aware of these upcoming meetings and are afforded an opportunity to comment in person or in writing on these proposed grazing regulations and the associated DEIS. Although public meetings are not scheduled in your immediate area, we do encourage you to submit written comments.

The schedule for the public meetings on the DEIS is as follows:

January 27 Marriott Hotel, 75 South West Temple, Salt Lake City, Utah, 6 p.m to 10 p.m.

January 28 Wyndam Phoenix Hotel, 50 East Adams Street, Phoenix, Arizona, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

January 31 Doubletree Riverside Hotel, 2900 Chinden Boulevard, Boise, Idaho, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

February 2 Holiday Inn Grand Montana, 5500 Midland Road, Billings, MT, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

February 3 Little America, 2800 West Lincolnway, Cheyenne, Wyoming, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.

February 5 Courtyard by Marriott-Embassy Row, 1600 Rhode Island Avenue
Washington, D.C., 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.

The proposed rule would, among other things, ensure that BLM managers consider and document the social, cultural, and economic consequences of decisions affecting grazing; allow the BLM and a grazing permittee to share title of permanent range improvements, such as a fence, well, or pipeline; require assessments and monitoring of resource conditions to support BLM evaluations of whether an allotment is meeting rangeland health standards; allow a more realistic timeframe for deciding on grazing-related actions needed to achieve rangeland health standards; remove the current three-consecutive-year limit on temporary non-use of a grazing permit by allowing livestock operators to apply for non-use for up to one year at a time (whether for conservation or business purposes); eliminate, in compliance with recent Federal court rulings, existing regulatory provisions that allow the BLM to issue long-term "conservation use" permits; and make clear how the BLM will authorize grazing if a Bureau decision affecting a grazing permit is "stayed" (postponed) pending administrative appeal.

State and local government input is vital to ensure effective management of the nation's public lands. You may submit written comments electronically or by regular mail, personal or messenger delivery. Comments must be electronically transmitted, delivered or postmarked no later than March 2, 2004. For regular mail, send your comments to: Director (630), Bureau of Land Management, Eastern States Office, 7450 Boston Boulevard, Springfield, Virginia 22153, Attention: RIN 1004-AD42. For personal or messenger delivery, comments should go to the Bureau of Land Management, 1620 L Street, N.W., Suite 401, Washington, D.C. 20036. We are encouraging individuals and organizations to submit electronically their comments on the proposed rule and DEIS. Copies of the proposed rule and DEIS as well as instructions on how to electronically comment on the documents can be found at BLM's Web site at www.blm.gov/.

Thank you in advance for your valuable comments. If you have any questions or concerns regarding either the proposed regulations or the Draft EIS, please feel free to contact Molly S. Brady, Project Manager, by phone at 202-452-7714 or by e-mail at mbrady@blm.gov.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Clarke
Director